

REMARKS

The instant application is a continuation of U.S. application serial number 09/621,012 (i.e., the '012 application). The instant application was originally filed on 6 July 2001 containing claims 1 – 166 from the '012 application. A Preliminary Amendment was also filed on 6 July 2001. The preliminary amendment canceled claims 1 – 69, 72 – 99, 101 – 119, 121- 125, 127, 134, 137, 144 – 146, 148 – 151, 153 – 159, and 166.

A Second Preliminary Amendment was filed on 1 October 2001. The second Preliminary Amendment amended claims 70, 71, 100, 120, 126, 135, 138, 143, and 147 and added new claims 166 – 207.

A Third Preliminary Amendment was filed on 4 June 2003. The Third Preliminary Amendment corrected a claim numbering error caused by the Second Preliminary Amendment. More specifically, claims 166 – 207 were renumbered as claims 167 – 208 (also, where appropriate, dependent claims were amended to depend from their proper renumbered base claim).

Claims 70, 71, 100, 120, 126, 135, 136, 138 – 143, 147, 152, 160 – 165, and 167 – 208 are pending and believed to be in condition for allowance. Due to the long delay associated with this application, Applicants respectfully request an early office action on the merits. If the Examiner requires additional information, he is respectfully requested to contact applicants' attorney at the phone number listed below so that prosecution may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted



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Dated: 25 August 2004